



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad  
Administration**

# Memorandum

Date: June 15, 1998

Reply to Att. of: MP&E 98-49

Subject: Dimensions Applicable to Handles of Uncoupling Levers

From: Edward R. English  
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To: Regional Administrators, Deputy Regional Administrators,  
Motive Power & Equipment Specialists and Inspectors

In the past some of our inspectors have taken exception to the handles of bottom operated uncoupling levers being more than 6 inches from the side of the car.

Section 231.1(k)(2) states in relevant part: (i) Handles of uncoupling levers, except those shown in Plate B or of similar designs, shall be not more than 6 inches from sides of car. (ii) Uncoupling levers of design shown on Plate B and of similar designs shall conform to the following prescribed limits: (iii) Handles shall be not more than 12, preferably 9, inches from sides of cars. Center lift arms shall be not less than 7 inches long. The top operated uncoupling lever shown in Plate B is similar in design to bottom operated uncoupling levers and are fundamentally the same, as both are operated in the same manner by an upward lift of the uncoupling lever handle to disengage the coupler lock block.

The reference in 231.1(k)(2)(i) to uncoupling levers of other than Plate B design requires that the uncoupling lever handle be not more than 6 inches from side of car. This refers primarily to those uncoupling levers which are operated by a downward motion of the uncoupling lever either by hand or foot. This type of uncoupling lever could be operated from the side ladder while the car was in motion.

Therefore, FRA will not take exception to bottom operated uncoupling levers that are similar in design to that shown in Plate B, unless the uncoupling lever handle is more than 12 inches from the side of the car.

Also, for your information, the Association of American Railroad's (AAR) Rule 22 for bottom operated uncoupling levers show the maximum distance of the uncoupling lever handle to be 12 inches from the side of the car.